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Explicit

Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
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M/M

Stray Kids (Band)

Hwang Hyunjin/Yang Jeongin | I.N

Yang Jeongin | I.N
Hwang Hyunjin
Stray Kids Ensemble

Alternate Universe - Non-Famous

Running Away

radical spontaneity

Strangers to Lovers

Mental Health Issues

Introspection

Developing Relationship

Falling In Love

messy boys making bad decisions with positive consequences

Explicit Sexual Content

Anal Sex

There Was Only One Bed

Emotional Hurt/Comfort

Happy Ending

English Fandom Trumps Hate 2025

common people

mrehk

Summary:

Jeongin runs a hand through his hair taking a long drag. He turns to Hyunjin on his exhale. “My life is fucking boring, man. It sucks.” He laughs again, the sound echoing against concrete.

“How do you mean?” Hyunjin asks, tilting his head a bit to one side. He’s got his hair tied back— a short ponytail at the nape of his neck, but a lock of it falls free, hanging over his cheek.

Once Jeongin starts he can’t stop— his heart moving as fast as his tongue, energy pent up behind his ribs. “My best friend is busy all the fucking time since he got a boyfriend, and I’m stuck working in this dead end job with shit hours— no offense— and I haven’t had sex in at least three months. Three, Hyunjin.”

Hyunjin stands up a bit straighter, folding his arms across his chest. He takes a deep breath, looking Jeongin in the eye. “Okay. Fuck it. Where’s somewhere you’ve always wanted to go?”

(OR: Jeongin runs away with his coworker, and the rest comes as naturally as it can for someone with control issues.)

Notes:

- For [edgeplay](http://archiveofourown.org/users/edgeplay/gifts) (<http://archiveofourown.org/users/edgeplay/gifts>).

this was created as part of Fandom Trumps Hate 2025; huge, massive thank yous to my prompter & the organizers of the event! it was so nice to write hyunin again <33

I was given endless creative freedom with this one, the guiding prompt being the classic mrehk hyuninisms of bleach, evergreen, and consequence of starshine, and I am so happy w/ how it turned out. i hope u like it too!

(and final thank u to sol and mila for cheering me on and reading thru to tell me i haven't lost my hyunin juice)

title from the pulp song, plot not from the pulp song

cw // non graphic vomiting. drinking. weed. cigarettes. vague mental health issues. very briefly mentioned parental death. non-specific family and past toxic relationship issues. religious references (they both grew up religious and aren't anymore)

(See the end of the work for [more notes \(#work_endnotes\)](#).)

Jeongin hates weddings.

Too much fucking hoopla. And drama, more often than not. There's always too many people, and none of them ever seem to like each other all that much— family and friends pulled in with no regard for the outcome. Pity invites. Worse, *guilt* invites.

It all gets worse as the night goes on. At the beginning, it's mostly fine. Everyone's eating. No one is too flagrantly blasted yet. But then the DJ starts, and it all goes to hell. Drunk people pulling on Jeongin's sleeves, and his apron, and his fucking waist.

The bride tried to fuck him tonight. The *bride*.

Jeongin doesn't really enjoy any aspect of his job. If he had to pick one type of event to cater for the rest of his life, he'd probably go for Bar Mitzvahs. They can't get too crazy because it's about the kids— but they're much less solemn than first communions. The Catholic thing still gives him hives, anyway. Bar Mitzvahs are fine. Weddings are terrible.

There's still an hour or two left in the night, but Jeongin is well overdue for a smoke. He feels like he can finally breathe as he shoves out the metal door at the back end of the venue. Letting into a poorly lit alley.

He fumbles to get his pack of cigarettes out— hisses when he drops them on the damp pavement. His hands are shaking because he hasn't smoked yet— he can't smoke because his hands are shaking. A never ending cycle of disappointment. He didn't used to smoke. He only started because he wanted a fucking break from weddings. Now he's stuck. He pulls a cigarette out and puts it between his lips, standing back up.

"Did the bride proposition you, too?"

Jeongin jumps, breathing out a string of curses. He glares back towards where his coworker is standing against the building, his own cigarette burning in his fingertips.

"Jesus Christ, Hwang."

Hyunjin doesn't seem bothered. He brings his cigarette to his lips, face flickering in the orange glow. "She told me she'd do it in the back when I said I'm gay. Is that homophobic?"

"Uh, yeah, probably, man," Jeongin snorts, lighting up, shaking out the last nerves hanging in his arms as he takes his first drag. Fuck. He needed this. "She just grabbed me and kinda started moaning a little bit. I dunno."

"Huh." Hyunjin stares into space, his face going perfectly blank. He's got an uncanny ability to do that. Not that Jeongin spends much time with him— but when he does, Hyunjin zones out like that. All spacey and detached from whatever is happening around him.

Jeongin exhales, his back hitting brick through his flimsy, white button up. He tries to do what Hyunjin does. Picks a spot in the distance and lets his vision go blurry.

Honestly, Jeongin has been having kind of a shitty week. It's Saturday, and everything has gone wrong since Monday. He got a parking ticket. He got in a fight with his sister. He made up with his sister, because he didn't have enough money on him to get dinner on Wednesday (the parking ticket had to be paid). He got in another fight with his sister. He's not talking to her. Seungmin is too busy for him now, and the last girl he dated told him he's too tired to be fun. Nothing exciting ever happens to him. He *is* too tired to be fun. He's no fun.

"Fuck," he blurts. Then, louder, on the edge of a deranged laugh. "*Fuck.*"

Hyunjin glances at him, his shoulders tensing up slightly.

Jeongin runs a hand through his hair taking a long drag. He turns to Hyunjin on his exhale. "My life is fucking boring, man. It sucks." He laughs again, the sound echoing against concrete.

"How do you mean?" Hyunjin asks, tilting his head a bit to one side. He's got his hair tied back— a short ponytail at the nape of his neck, but a lock of it falls free, hanging over his cheek.

Once Jeongin starts he can't stop— his heart moving as fast as his tongue, energy pent up behind his ribs. "My best friend is busy all the fucking time since he got a boyfriend, and I'm stuck working in this dead end job with shit hours— no offense— and I haven't had sex in at least three months. *Three*, Hyunjin."

Hyunjin blinks at him.

They don't know each other like that. Like *this*. They're coworkers that don't talk save for mumbled hellos when they run into each other in the parking lot. Jeongin has not properly laid ground with any of his coworkers to be speaking to them like this. He's not friends with them. They're not friends with him. He only knows Hyunjin's name because it's on his nametag, and the longest time they've ever spent together was when Hyunjin's shitty car broke down after work and he had no way to get home. And, even then, they didn't talk. Jeongin drove him, and Hyunjin cried in the passenger's seat. It was awkward as fuck.

"You could have fucked the bride," Hyunjin says. "Well, you still could, probably."

Jeongin grimaces. He sucks air through his teeth. "I don't want to fuck the bride. I don't fuck around with cheating. Too messy."

Hyunjin side-eyes him. "Right, so, if it wasn't messy, it'd be fine?"

Jeongin shrugs noncommittally, his mouth turned down. "If it wasn't messy the weight of the thing wouldn't be so immoral. I don't know. I dropped out of college."

"Me too." Hyunjin sighs. He lets the butt of his cigarette fall to the ground, squishing it under the toe of his non-slip shoe. Standard issue. "My life kind of sucks too."

"Misery loves company, I suppose."

Hyunjin's eyes widen the slightest bit, but they stay unfocused. "Isn't that a Paramore album?"

"No. That's Misery Business. And it's a song— the album is called Riot!" Jeongin stops himself before he rambles too much. As if it's not already too much. "Not that you asked. But, now you know."

"I kind of asked."

Jeongin shrugs. "I guess you kind of did."

They lapse into silence for a bit. Jeongin finishes his cigarette. Hyunjin stares into space. It's quiet, just the light trickle of water swirling in the drainage grate nearby.

Hyunjin stands up a bit straighter, folding his arms across his chest. He takes a deep breath, looking Jeongin in the eye. "Okay. Fuck it. Where's somewhere you've always wanted to go?"

"What?" Jeongin lets out a surprised laugh. He snuffs his cigarette on the wall, dropping the butt on the ground.

"Come on," Hyunjin urges. "Anywhere."

"Uh," Jeongin stutters. He wipes his palms on his slacks. "Like. The East coast, I guess. I've never been anywhere but here."

Hyunjin doesn't flinch. "Let's go, then."

Jeongin opens his mouth, but only an incredulous little noise comes out. He blinks. Tries again. "We barely know each other."

"That's why it's not boring."

"Yeah..." Jeongin says. He chews on his bottom lip— the flaky dry skin there. He could probably use some more water. He's dehydrated. He's working a shitty job with shitty hours, and he's sick of himself, and his life, and nothing exciting ever happens to him, because he's too tired to be fun— "Yeah," he says again, this time with a nod. More sure of himself. "Yeah. Fuck it. Let's do it."

Hyunjin's eyebrows shoot up, like he wasn't expecting to prevail. "Really?" he asks.

"Yeah. I think—" Jeongin swallows. Nods. "Yeah."

That earns him a smile. He's never seen Hyunjin smile. "How's your car do long distance?"

Jeongin chokes on his laugh. "My car can make it to the train station."

"That works."

★

The thrill of the thing lasts for a while.

Jeongin keeps saying, "*Oh my god*," and Hyunjin keeps nervously giggling. They grabbed their shit from the locker room and bolted before their boss could stop them. Jeongin drives fifteen over, trying to quell the shake in his hands.

They catch the last train of the night. Cheapest seats.

Hyunjin won't quit shivering, so Jeongin pulls out his old college crewneck and makes him put it on. He resists for a bit, but gives in soon enough, sliding it over his head and coming out a little pinker than he was.

Jeongin's heart rate doesn't settle until Hyunjin falls asleep— his head tilted back, train softly jostling him until he's resting on Jeongin's shoulder. He looks less worried when he sleeps. His face straightens out. Goes soft.

It's fucking crazy. This is fucking crazy. Jeongin could use a smoke, but he can't have one now— not on the train.

He lets out a long exhale. He's always so tired, anyway. He falls asleep easily enough, his arms tight across his chest, a practical stranger's head on his shoulder.

It takes ten hours total. They end up dropped in a city neither of them have ever been to before— walking a few

blocks until they find a cheap motel, the sun just rising, a soft orange glow silhouetting the streets. Jeongin does the talking, because Hyunjin is being jumpy again. They're both tired enough to keep sleeping— so they sleep. One, king sized bed in the middle of the room. The only available space for them.

At the very least, it's not boring.

★

Jeongin wakes up sometime in the early afternoon, light filtering in through the dusty curtains hanging over the window. He sits up, sucking in a sharp breath. Hyunjin doesn't move. He's laying on his side, knees tucked up to his chest, sleeping quietly, as if not to take up too much space.

Shit. What the fuck is he doing? He scrubs a hand over his face, swinging his legs off the bed.

They both only had one change of clothes. Whatever street clothes they keep in their work bags. Jeongin slept in jeans, because he didn't want to make Hyunjin uncomfortable. His t-shirt sticks to his stomach, his legs stiff.

He pushes himself up, grimacing. Fumbles for his phone and his cigarettes and stumbles outside. The motel they're at is open-faced. Two lines of rooms, the second floor caged in by a balcony overlooking the parking lot.

Jeongin pulls out a cigarette, lighting it and leaning against the railing. He feels kind of nauseous. He's not wearing shoes, or socks— just his unbuttoned jeans and shirt. He has bigger problems. Like, whatever the fuck he was thinking last night. Running away with some guy he doesn't even know.

Hyunjin is fine. If Jeongin had to pick, he'd say Hyunjin is one of his favorite coworkers— but it's more of a consequence of the situation rather than genuine interest. He and Hyunjin don't talk. Hyunjin is quiet. Jeongin likes that at work. He's not trying to be talked to.

He pulls out his phone. Drops it on the concrete. Picks it up, sliding his thumb over the screen.

In all the hours he's been missing, he only has three texts. All of them from his sister. *It would be nice if you'd tell me when you're not coming home, even if you're not talking to me.* Then, an hour later. *Jeongin.* And another hour later. *Whatever. Fuck you.*

Jeongin can feel a headache coming on. He pinches the bridge of his nose, taking another drag, hoping it will calm him down enough to type. Maybe he should tell Sooyoung he'll be on the next train home. He could leave now. Grab his shit and go before Hyunjin wakes up.

Shit.

Who is he kidding? He'd never do that.

He has, like, a *thing*. The therapist he saw for the brief moment he had the insurance for one told him that he has a complex for taking care of others. Something to do with his dad being a shithead after his mom died. Jeongin doesn't know. He was never good at paying attention during those sessions.

So, he could go and wake Hyunjin up. Tell him they're going home. Big mistake to come here. Huge. Jeongin doesn't even know where the fuck they are, really. Or what they're supposed to do. What are they doing?

He jumps when the door opens behind him, negating the embarrassment by combing his fingers through his hair. Hyunjin stands in the doorway, socked toes just crossing the threshold. He's still wearing Jeongin's sweatshirt. Jeongin didn't know how to ask for it back, so he didn't. He slept in jeans too. There's a pink line on his cheek where the pillow was pressed into it.

"What are you doing?" he asks. It almost sounds accusatory.

"Smoking," Jeongin says, lifting his hand to show. He chews on his lip, watching Hyunjin's eyes trail the cigarette. He doesn't react much. He seems unbothered. Jeongin can't quit vibrating with this feeling like he's fucking up— and Hyunjin is just standing there. "We're going to get fired. Fuck. We're so getting fired."

Hyunjin shrugs. "So what?"

"So what?" Jeongin laughs. It sounds unbalanced. Shaky. "I kind of need a job, man. I'm— I have, like, just enough in my bank account to get by. Maybe a couple of weeks."

"We both hate that job, though," Hyunjin frowns. He leans against the doorframe, crossing his arms. He looks sort of small like that. Defensive. "I'm kind of sick of doing what I'm supposed to do."

Another unsteady laugh. "We're cater waiters in our mid twenties, I don't know if that's what we're *supposed* to do."

"Not anymore we're not." Hyunjin sniffs. "You're proving my point, anyway."

Jeongin takes his last good drag off his cigarette before ashing it on the railing and dropping it into the parking lot below them. He pulls out his phone again, tapping open his texts. He types out a rapid, *i'm fine. nothing to do with you.* He worries his lip between his teeth as he waits for Sooyoung to respond. She's usually quick. He can taste blood on his tongue— his bottom lip cracking.

Hyunjin makes a soft noise of disapproval. "If this is going to work, you have to shut off your phone. It'll only fuck you up more."

Jeongin opens his mouth to argue, but nothing comes out. Hyunjin catches his eye from the door, and he looks so serious about it. Like he knows something Jeongin doesn't. Jeongin doesn't know how to deal with that. He doesn't

know how to disagree, either. His phone does make him more antsy. He's always toeing the edge of anxiety. What he ends up saying is a weak argument of, "But, my sister..."

"Tell her you're shutting your phone off. You're an adult."

"Did you shut your phone off?"

"Yeah. But, I don't think anyone's going to be looking for me."

Jeongin blows out a long breath, looking down at his screen. He can see Sooyoung typing. He beats her to it.

i went out of town with my coworker. his name is hwang hyunjin before you freak. we're gonna be gone for a bit. idk. my service kinda sucks out here. i'll call when i can. don't make a big deal out of it. i just need a fucking break.

Sooyoung's typing stops. Jeongin turns off his phone before she can answer. He looks up, his heart threatening to climb up his throat. "There," he says, holding it up so Hyunjin can see.

Hyunjin nods, his neutral expression dropping for half a second before he steadies it again. Like he's surprised Jeongin listened. He tries to sound confident when he says, "Good."

Jeongin licks over his split lip. He still kind of feels like throwing up. "So, what the fuck are we doing?"

"I don't know."

"Great," Jeongin takes in a sharp breath. His hands flex into fists in the air, trying to keep himself grounded.

"Yeah. Okay. Not knowing is fine."

Hyunjin eyes him. "You have control problems?"

"I don't—" Jeongin takes another deep breath. He shuts his eyes for a second. "I need to eat something. I'm starved."

"Alright," Hyunjin snorts.

He turns on his heel, walking back into the room, leaving Jeongin alone outside, the door wide open. A clear invitation to follow.

★

Hyunjin orders a black coffee and eggs. That's it. He doesn't seem bothered by how much food Jeongin orders. He doesn't say anything. He just sips on his drink and eats tiny, mouselike bites of his scramble.

They found a diner a bit down the road from where they're staying. Old style place with red neon lights outside and a jukebox in the corner. Sparkly vinyl booths that stick to skin and the lingering smell of smoke, even though it's not allowed inside.

Jeongin swallows down a mouthful of Coke. It burns his throat a bit. Hyunjin is flighty. He's not good at eye contact. Jeongin doesn't mind forcing it. He narrows his eyes, looking across the table. He's (probably) without a job, and he's definitely out of his depth, and, yeah, he has control issues— but it's because he was raised in the church. He knows that much. Didn't need any fancy doctor to tell him that.

"I don't know anything about you," Jeongin says, tapping his fingers on the table, one after the other, a steady rhythm.

"I don't know why you would," Hyunjin takes another sip of coffee.

He's got pretty hands. Rings on three of his fingers. Silver bringing out the warmth of his skin. Jeongin noticed a long time ago that Hyunjin is pretty. It's kind of hard not to notice. Everyone notices. Everyone talks about it. Hyunjin ignores the murmurs, even when they're happening right in front of them. He does that thing— gets all detached from reality. Jeongin has seen it.

So, yeah, he's pretty. He's really pretty. But, it's a little unnerving up close. When Jeongin is paying attention. Hyunjin has a sort of grace about him. Plucky, delicate movements— bony wrists— a softness to his eyes. Like he's been pulled out of a different time and forced to exist in the present. His energy is very particular.

His hair is long and dark. He has it parted down the middle and tucked behind his ears. Not tied back today— like it always is at work. Soft eyes, but sharp. The softness comes from within— his features are very striking. It's the way he handles himself that brings the reprieve.

"For what it's worth, I don't know anything about you, either," Hyunjin says, when Jeongin has been doing nothing but staring for a bit too long. "I just call you *the hot guy from work* to my friend."

Jeongin stares at him, trying to trace the boldness to the source. Hyunjin, again, refuses to meet his eyes.

"Don't you have a boyfriend?" Jeongin asks. He's pretty sure Hyunjin does. There's some guy that comes to pick him up from work sometimes. When Hyunjin isn't taking the bus, he's getting picked up by *him*. Flashy car— meathead type of dude— Jeongin would probably hate him, but he figures Hyunjin's type is a little bit different than his.

Hyunjin shrugs, his eyes going empty again.

"Is your boyfriend going to come kill me for running away with you? We're sharing a bed, Hyunjin." Jeongin's fingers tap, tap, *tap* on the table.

"He doesn't know where I went," Hyunjin glances up at Jeongin. He's frowning. The lines disturb his peace. "I don't care what he thinks, honestly. I doubt he'll even realize I've gone."

“Aw, *shit*,” Jeongin hisses. He props his elbows up on the table just to drop his head in his hands. The heels of his palms press into his eyes, sending little bursts of white floating across his vision. “What the fuck. Why did I agree to this?” He presses two fingers into each of his temples, tilting his chin up.

Hyunjin doesn’t seem too put off. He keeps frowning, though. “Are you finished with that?”

“With what?” Jeongin looks down at his plate. There’s, like, two fries left. “My food? Go crazy.”

“No. With having a crisis.”

Jeongin blinks. “Oh. Not really. I feel like I should be allowed at least a day.”

“A day is a long time.”

“Well, excuse me for not being good at acting on the fly.”

“You are good at acting on the fly, though. You left with me last night without a word.”

Jeongin frowns, sucking a long breath through his teeth. “It’s always the aftershock, Hwang. I grew up Catholic. It’s never the act, it’s what happens afterwards that fucks you up. *Retribution*.”

Hyunjin wrinkles his nose up. “I feel like that’s a bad excuse. I was raised Lutheran.”

“Damn.”

“I know.”

“Had it easy.”

Hyunjin rolls his eyes. “You don’t know anything about me.”

“That’s what I’ve been saying.”

“Hm.” Hyunjin pulls out his wallet and unrolls a couple of bills. He drops them on the table. “We should buy clothes. Or something. I want a toothbrush.”

“How long are we staying?”

Hyunjin shrugs. He loves doing that, apparently. Skirting answers. “However long we feel like.” He stands up, shoving his wallet back into his pocket with his hands, wandering towards the front door.

Jeongin chews on the inside of his cheek, watching him go.

He could say that he feels like leaving now. That he’d love to give into the guilt eating away at the bottom of his stomach and get on a train. That he’s sick of it. He doesn’t want to know more. He made a mistake. He probably should do all of that. Say all of that.

Hyunjin turns around to look at him when he gets to the door, eyebrows raised in question.

God *fucking* damnit.

Jeongin has always had a problem with shiny things. Easily distracted. His legs never sit still. When they were growing up, Sooyoung would make fun of him. She’d say, “*Look! A bird!*” whenever Jeongin would get off topic. Whenever he’d make an impulsive decision, he’d feel good in the moment, and regret the fallout. He doesn’t have control issues—he has issues controlling himself. Reigning in his wants. Minimizing the damage.

He’s always had a hard time resisting the call of something new. Something better. Something that might actually work out for once—even if the chances are slim.

Hyunjin is pretty. He’s gorgeous. He’s wearing Jeongin’s sweatshirt, and lighting a cigarette right outside the front window, waiting for Jeongin to come out. Jeongin knows nothing about him.

Regrettably—or, *guiltily*—he wants to. He really is sick of being bored.

“God fucking damnit,” he sighs, getting up and following the path Hyunjin took out.

★

Hyunjin sets a pair of bright yellow flower shaped sunglasses on his face, turning around to stare at Jeongin very seriously. “Do you like?”

Jeongin scrunches his nose, reaching out to turn over the price tag on them. “For that price?”

“You’re no fun.”

“I’ve been telling you that,” Jeongin snorts. “That’s literally the whole reason why my life is boring.”

“Okay,” Hyunjin says, pushing the glasses down the bridge of his nose. “Let me reframe my question. Do you think I look good in these, Jeongin?”

Jeongin stares at him for a second. Narrows his eyes, taking his time to study Hyunjin’s face. The plush downturn of his lips, pink and pretty. The mole under his eye. Well groomed eyebrows, somehow. Jeongin doesn’t know how he has the patience for that.

Yeah, Hyunjin looks good in them. A little stupid, but good. He’s good looking. He’d be hard pressed to look bad.

“Does anyone look good in those?” is what Jeongin says.

Hyunjin sighs. He plucks the glasses off his face and returns them to the rack. They found a little corner-store supermarket that has a bit of everything. Their tiny cart is empty save for toothbrushes and toothpaste. Hyunjin keeps stopping to pick at novelties.

“I stole,” Hyunjin says plainly. He runs his finger along the edge of the sunglass rack, finding another pair and pulling them off. He sets them gingerly over his face. Oval and black. They’ve probably been on that rack since the

eighties. They look good. Of course they do. “I can afford sunglasses.”

“What do you mean *you stole?*”

Hyunjin shrugs. “I took his wallet.”

“Whose wallet?”

“That guy you were so obsessed with at breakfast.” Hyunjin waves nonchalantly, pulling the glasses off and dropping them in the cart. He starts walking away, leaving Jeongin to follow lamely behind him, cart in tow.

“Your boyfriend?” Jeongin asks incredulously. He doesn’t *get* Hyunjin.

“He’s not going to miss it. He’s always so preoccupied. He’ll think he lost it at work, probably. He always carries cash. It was too convenient to pass up.” Hyunjin turns over his shoulder and grins. It reaches his eyes. Jeongin’s stomach flips. “You could get sunglasses too. I’ll pay for you.”

“I—” Jeongin chokes out a laugh. “You’re insane.”

“Ew. Don’t call me that,” Hyunjin’s face turns immediately. “He calls me that a lot.”

Jeongin stops walking, arms folded over the bar of the cart. He stares at the back of Hyunjin’s head. “Are you, like, *okay?*”

Hyunjin whirls around, mouth turning down at the corners. “I’m okay now.”

“What if I don’t believe you?”

“What do I care if you believe me, Yang Jeongin?” Hyunjin scoffs. “You’re just the hot guy from work.”

Fair enough.

★

Hwang Hyunjin is an enigma.

Jeongin feels like he’s been told to stop staring at the sun, but he can’t bring himself to look away. Black crescents burned into his retinas from the shadow of the eclipse. He’s just too desperate to drink Hyunjin in while he’s got him here— at arm’s length.

Hwang Hyunjin is cagey.

After they bought cheap cotton clothes and basic toiletries with Hyunjin’s boyfriend’s money, they went to the laundromat. Hyunjin bought a lollipop out of one of the vending machines and sat on top of the dryer, across from where Jeongin was sitting in a chair, like a civilized person.

He was staring so intensely that Jeongin had no choice but to stare back. Then, Hyunjin quit it. Got all flighty, like he wasn’t sure what he wanted. He went out to smoke a cigarette, and Jeongin could see his hands shaking through the window.

Hyunjin didn’t take off Jeongin’s sweatshirt to wash it. He kept it on, hugged it close to his body. He hasn’t taken it off since he put it on. Jeongin isn’t going to ask him to. It’s fine.

Hwang Hyunjin is human— despite what Jeongin may think in the back of his mind.

He brushes his teeth next to Jeongin at the motel sink. He leans close to the mirror and pulls at his skin with careful fingers. Frowns when he finds a blemish. He brushes his hair, and strands fall out. He yawns, eyes closing long enough that Jeongin can look at him, unburdened, for just a second.

They fall asleep next to each other with the TV playing on a low volume. The oldies channel. Because Hyunjin kept fussing and rolling around, and he checked the lock on the door three times. “*I’ll wait for you to fall asleep first, Hyunjin. It’s okay,*” Jeongin said. And Hyunjin rolled over and looked at him with wide, wet eyes, shiny in the dim glow of city lights filtering through the curtains. He said, “*Really?*” And Jeongin said, “*Yeah.*”

Hwang Hyunjin is a Pisces. He’s an early riser when his sleep schedule isn’t fucked. He likes sitcoms, because his family life was never normal, and he liked the idea of it. He doesn’t believe in god. He used to be an alcoholic, so now he doesn’t drink. He understands how stupid it sounds to say that at twenty five years old, but that doesn’t make it less true. Twenty three was a bad year. He has one friend, because he’s not good at making them, and he’s worse at keeping them. He usually ends up sleeping with them. He doesn’t regret it, but he wishes he did.

Jeongin brings another forkful of hashbrowns to his mouth. He chews slowly, staring at Hyunjin across the diner table. He swallows, then says, “Why are you telling me all this?”

“Because I like you,” Hyunjin says, completely sure of his answer.

“That was easy.”

Hyunjin’s face goes serious. He extends his leg under the table and kicks Jeongin in the shin. “No. It wasn’t. I’m not easy.”

Jeongin huffs into his coffee, a puff of steam rolling off the surface. “You’re a little easy. I’m not complaining, though. It’s fine. I’m not, like, against easy. I just thought you’d make me work a little harder.”

“I trust you,” Hyunjin says by way of explanation.

“That’s good,” Jeongin lets out a little breath. “I’m sleeping in your bed, so...”

Hyunjin nods like he’s agreeing. He snuffles softly. “I knew you were good. That’s why I asked you.”

“Have you been *thinking* about me, Hwang?” Jeongin teases, smile crawling across his face.

“I thought it was obvious that I’d been thinking about you.” Hyunjin says. He doesn’t flinch. Doesn’t back down. He’s cagey, but he’s bold when he wants to be. His cheeks flush slightly, but he holds Jeongin’s eyes.

Jeongin is the one to look away this time. He laughs, under his breath. Scrubs the heels of his palms over his eyes, getting the last bits of sleep.

“I’m an Aquarius,” he says. He takes a long breath. Lets it out. “I’m not good at getting up early, but I can. Sitcoms are fine. I don’t believe in god either, but I used to. I’m addicted to cigarettes, and my hands shake without them— which I’m self conscious about for no good reason. I have one friend, and a sister, I haven’t slept with anyone in a while, because I’m no fun. My last girlfriend told me I’m no fun. She was right.”

Hyunjin looks at him for a long moment. A slow, sweet smile moves across his lips. Genuinely delighted. Jeongin feels fucking giddy that he’s the one that put it there, honestly.

“We should do something fun tonight,” Hyunjin says.

And what is Jeongin going to do? Say no?

★

Clubbing. That’s what Hyunjin deems *fun for people their age*, apparently.

Jeongin hasn’t been clubbing since he was seventeen and wanted to pretend to be more adult than he actually was.

They put on their work clothes, because what the fuck else are they meant to wear? Hyunjin doesn’t bother to tuck Jeongin’s crewneck into his slacks, he just lets it hang off his frame. Jeongin does up his buttons, but leaves a few too many open at the top.

Hyunjin’s eyes dart down to his chest for a second, but he pretends to be looking at the gold crucifix hanging against Jeongin’s bare sternum.

“Thought you weren’t Catholic anymore,” Hyunjin says, his fingers getting close enough to graze the metal. Jeongin does his best not to shiver, even when Hyunjin’s hand meets his skin.

Jeongin shrugs. He can be cagey too. “I don’t believe in god.”

“Pretty important part, no?”

“Why are you asking me questions like that?” Jeongin reaches up to flick a lock of Hyunjin’s hair away from his face. “I thought we were having fun tonight.”

“I am having fun.”

“Okay.”

They get in a cab, and Hyunjin leans over Jeongin’s lap and asks the driver where the best club is. The guy seems genuinely confused. He stutters out some combination of words and takes off in one direction. Ends up dropping them off down a main strip where everything is happening. There’s floods of people down a pedestrian walkway, lined with nightclubs.

It’ll do.

Jeongin sticks close to Hyunjin as he peruses the street for the right choice. Or, maybe Hyunjin is sticking close to him. It’s hard to tell. Jeongin’s hand is on the small of Hyunjin’s back, leading him through the crowd.

They look ridiculous in their clunky shoes and matching slacks. Hyunjin in a sweatshirt that’s very obviously not his, and Jeongin looking like he’s just gotten out of church. It’s fine. They can have fun even if they look a mess. That doesn’t seem like it would be a major constraint on the engagement of revelry.

The place Hyunjin decides on is down a flight of stairs, in the basement of a brick building. The lighting is terrible, neon pink and blue, and the music is too loud to comprehend. The bass sticks in Jeongin’s bones, shaking up his insides. He hates places like this unless he’s a little drunk.

He doesn’t think about Hyunjin’s aversion until he’s already downed a shot. His eyes go wide, glass clinking against the counter. “Oh, shit. Sorry— you don’t drink.”

“I don’t mind if you do.” Hyunjin leans in, mouth landing near Jeongin’s ear. “I have weed, we’ll be fine.”

Jeongin nods dumbly. He doesn’t know what he’s supposed to say to that. Hyunjin raises his eyebrows, glancing towards Jeongin’s second shot. Fuck it— if Jeongin is going to have fun, he’s gotta be drunk. He swallows it with a slight wince. Orders something else to drink.

He doesn’t know if he’d call this fun. There’s a lot of people. Everyone’s sweaty, and sparkly, and breathing like they’re mid-orgasm. It’s *hot*. Physically hot. Hyunjin’s eyes are stuck to Jeongin’s mouth every time he takes a drink— and he’s hanging close— and he’s pulling Jeongin to the bathroom to get high, because he’s tired of waiting, probably.

They trade off hits in the last stall of the ladies— because some woman told them that the smoke detector works in the mens. Nice girl. She definitely thinks they’re gay. They’re not *not* gay.

Hyunjin looks pretty when he smokes. He looks pretty when his eyelids start drooping. He looks pretty in Jeongin’s clothes.

Jeongin is fucked up. He is having fun. He’s having fun when Hyunjin asks him to dance. He’s crossed enough to say yes.

Right in the thick of the floor— Hyunjin leads Jeongin under the disco ball spinning in the middle of the room. He turns around, winds his arms around Jeongin's neck.

Jeongin doesn't usually want for much. He never knows what to ask Sooyoung for for his birthday, or Christmas. He doesn't ever know what he wants to eat. He can never decide on what to do with himself, or where to go. He's not the kind of person to ache and yearn for things like that.

But, right now, he so badly wants.

It's sweaty, and sparkly, and Hyunjin is breathing like he's mid-orgasm, Jeongin's hands skirting his hips but not committing.

What the hell did Jeongin say the other night? He doesn't fuck with adultery. Not because of the religious thing— or, not really. It's the mess. He hates mess. He hates being second string. Why is he always second string? Such a fucking mess.

But, god, he wants.

Hyunjin begs him in with warm hands on the back of his neck. His breath is sticky against Jeongin's ear. "I promise, it won't be messy," he says, like he's reading Jeongin's mind. Stranger things have happened.

"You can't say that," Jeongin says. His ears are ringing, and his hands are itching to grab Hyunjin how he wants to. To dance with him for real. Like he's allowed. "How can you say that?"

Hyunjin backs off. He tips his chin down, looking Jeongin straight in the eye through thick lashes. "I *left* him, Jeongin," he shouts, his words barely reaching Jeongin over the music. The next ones are inaudible— but Jeongin can read lips, "*Touch me.*"

Jeongin does as he's told. He's good at that. He's weak to Hyunjin, it seems. They're going to have to figure this out before anything more happens— but for now— he allows himself to touch.

His hands splay over Hyunjin's hips, yanking him closer. Hyunjin gasps sharply, and then he smiles. His eyes shine. He's beautiful. Really. Jeongin brings one hand up his back, the other dipping under the hem of his sweatshirt. Greedy. He never claimed he wasn't. He's drunk, and high, and he's got the world at his fingertips.

They're dancing, but it's not... *civilized*.

Jeongin has danced a few times with a partner. At school dances, awkward, stepping on each other's feet. With his sister at a wedding. With his girlfriend, when she insisted on trying in the middle of the living room. It was supposed to be romantic— but Jeongin ruined that, too.

Hyunjin makes it easy, but he lied to Jeongin about the mess. It feels a little messy. Hyunjin's hips grinding against his, Hyunjin's lips parted, slick with spit because he keeps chewing on them. He shines, and Jeongin is a crow. He's so desperate to pluck him up and take him away.

Fuck. He's really fucked up.

He tips his head closer— forehead resting against Hyunjin's. Takes a shuddering breath. There's no real tell for how long it's been. Hyunjin is sweating— probably because he's wearing a goddamn sweatshirt in a nightclub. His breath is uneven.

"I'm—" Jeongin starts. But his stomach turns. It doesn't stop turning. "I'm gonna be sick."

Hyunjin manages to understand. He fists his hand in Jeongin's shirt and drags him out. Shoves through a fire exit next to the bathrooms— letting them into the back alley— a shipping dock. Jeongin doubles over and empties his stomach on the pavement.

A hand on his back, rubbing warm circles. And, when he's done, a hand in his. A shy look.

"It feels fuckin' messy, Hyunjin," Jeongin says, his throat still burning from stomach acid.

Hyunjin smiles at him, and Jeongin wishes it didn't work. "Have a cigarette, you'll be fine," Hyunjin says. He runs a hand through Jeongin's hair, and then slides his hand back into Jeongin's, and it's fine. It feels fine. Hyunjin is wearing his sweatshirt.

It's fun, somehow. Or, maybe Jeongin is just bad at wanting.

★

Jeongin wakes up sitting upright.

His body feels stiff, and cold, and there's a weight against his right side. A head on his shoulder. Hyunjin is breathing into his neck, hot and sticky, groaning a little when Jeongin startles awake.

Last night— *happened*.

They went to a convenience store and bought food. Jeongin tried to clean the taste of vomit out of his mouth with ice cream and soda. They couldn't remember how to get back to the motel, so they just didn't. Hyunjin got tired of walking in the middle of a park and sat down. Tugged at Jeongin's arm until he did the same.

The sun is rising now. Peeking over the horizon in the softest pink. Birds chirp in the tree branches above them, a few sparrows fighting over a twig near their non-slip, standard issue shoes from the job they both used to share.

It's strange. Funny, even, that they used to share more, but they weren't anything to each other then. It's been a couple of days, and they've lost what they used to share, but now Jeongin isn't sure how easy it would be to let go of

this.

What are they to each other, really? Friends? Something less? Jeongin would like to think it's something more. He doesn't know if he should be allowed that. Something else he can't have.

"Are you alright?" Jeongin asks, his voice thick with sleep and all stuffed up from spending the night on a fucking park bench.

Hyunjin gets up, then. Sits up straight, though he wobbles slightly. He blinks. Brushes his hair out of his eyes. "I'm okay. Are you okay?" He turns his eyes on Jeongin, skeptical. Jeongin doesn't know why.

"I'm fine."

As soon as the words leave his lips, another harsh wave of nausea rolls through Jeongin's stomach. He stands up, stumbling a few feet to the side to throw up in a garbage can, his hands curling tight around flaking paint over the metal rim.

"Christ," he groans, spitting when it's over. The guilt follows. Hard and fast, just as he'd been waiting for. It settles like a storm cloud over his shoulders. A burden. Anticipatory. "I really should call my sister," he says, voice scratchy.

Hyunjin doesn't flinch. His arms wrap across his own chest, like he's trying to give himself a hug. "Okay."

Jeongin grunts, standing up straight again. He waits a moment, eyes closed, to make sure he's not going to be sick again. When he manages a deep breath with no sign of nausea, he points towards the street. "I'm gonna go to the pay phone so she can't keep me on the line."

"Alright." Hyunjin nods.

"Do you have—"

Hyunjin is already holding out his hand, coins in his palm. Jeongin mutters a thank you, walking towards the two phones near the street corner. He sighs when he reaches them, puts his hand on the plastic shell encasing one, thumbing the coins into the slot. He has no idea what time it is. Maybe seven. Sooyoung should be up.

The phone rings twice. "Hello?"

"Yo." Jeongin flinches before she even unloads on him. Instinct.

"Jeongin, *oh my fucking god you idiot*— are you fucking serious right now?"

He leans against his arm, closing his eyes. "Dude, chill, I'm fine."

"I was going to put out a fucking missing persons report, Jeongin!" She's shouting now. "The only reason I didn't was because I thought maybe you were on a bender and I didn't want you to get fuckin' arrested when they found you! *Fuck you!*"

"I told you who I was with!"

"Much fucking good that does, you asshole!"

"Can you—" Jeongin presses two fingers to his temple, sucking in a tight breath through his teeth. He makes sure his voice doesn't sound defensive when he says, "I'm *sorry*."

"Like hell you are, Yang Jeongin—"

"I *am* sorry. Okay? I—" Jeongin exhales, turning to look back at the bench. Hyunjin sits still, still hugging himself. His hair shines against the pink of the sky. "I met someone."

"You *met* someone? That's what you're going with?"

"Yeah. It's the truth."

"You ran away without telling anyone because you met someone."

"It was kind of spontaneous."

"You don't *do* spontaneous, Jeongin! You're not supposed to make me worry like this!"

Jeongin rolls his eyes. He chews on his bottom lip, tapping his finger against the plastic cover. "My minutes are about to run up. I'll call you again in a couple of days, alright?"

"How are you paying for this? Do you need me to wire you money?"

"You don't have money to wire me, idiot."

Sooyoung takes a long, suffering breath. "Jeongin. Be fucking honest with me."

"I'm being honest. I'm fine. I don't need money. I'll call you if I need help. I met someone, and I think I like him a lot, so— just— let me be spontaneous for a second."

"One," Sooyoung counts down his second immediately.

"I love you."

"I lo—"

The line goes dead.

Jeongin hangs up the phone, looking at the coins left in his hand. He could have paid for more, but— well. He doesn't want to. He's experimenting with wants.

He meanders back over to Hyunjin, hands in his pockets. Hyunjin looks up at him, his face soft and relaxed. "Okay?" he asks.

"Okay," Jeongin returns. He holds his hand out for Hyunjin to take, to help him up. The gust of fresh morning air that washes over them when they tangle their fingers together feels like the Earth letting out a sigh of relief.

★

If they were here for more than a moment in time, maybe they could be regulars at this place.

The diner right by their motel. Sparkly red vinyl booths and neon lights. Breakfast all day. Coffee always hot, though, not particularly good. Jeongin would like to carve out a part of his chest and pick up this scene and tuck it away for safe keeping. He and Hyunjin in a middle booth along the line of windows. Coffee steaming, food just set down.

Hyunjin is eating more now. He's looking healthier, even if it's only been a handful of days. He sleeps with Jeongin, that's for sure. His eyes aren't so tired. Jeongin has been looking at him a lot. Can't stop himself.

"I want one," Hyunjin says, leaning over and sticking his fork into one of Jeongin's sausage links. Jeongin turns the plate to make it easier for him. Hyunjin smiles like he's won the lottery. He keeps smiling, even as he's chewing.

"You're funny, Hwang," Jeongin says, almost mindlessly.

Hyunjin's eyebrows pull together. "How so?"

"I dunno. You just—" Jeongin waves his fork around, trying to illustrate a point that's contained completely in his head. "Never met anyone like you."

"That's sweet." Hyunjin seems to accept that answer. His face relaxes again. He pulls off a piece of his pancake with his fork, sticking it in his mouth. He's not afraid of Jeongin seeing anything anymore, Jeongin has noticed. Of course he noticed.

"Why didn't you just tell me you don't have a boyfriend," Jeongin asks plainly. He doesn't really feel like beating around the bush. He's still got the taste of stomach acid hanging on the back of his tongue.

Hyunjin's eyes flick up for a split second. He shrugs. Takes a big gulp of orange juice. "Wanted to make sure I knew what you wanted first."

Jeongin stares at him. There's a bit of strawberry on the corner of his lips. Jeongin reaches out, steadying Hyunjin's chin with the curl of his fingers and wiping it away with his thumb. Hyunjin goes very still, but doesn't protest. He lets Jeongin's hand linger. Smiles after Jeongin is finished, and then smiles wider when Jeongin sucks the strawberry off his own thumb.

"So," Jeongin hedges. He's not sure how much Hyunjin will give. "What happened with him?"

Another shrug. "Didn't like him that much. Fad of the week."

"Didn't you date him for a few months?"

"Eight," Hyunjin says, like it's not ridiculous. He frowns, bottom lip poking out. "He was mean to me. Do you feel bad?"

Jeongin snorts. "What kind of a fucking question is that?"

"An attention seeking one." Hyunjin meets his eye, tongue poking out to run over his bottom lip. He's a problem. He's going to be a problem. He's got his claws sunk into Jeongin's chest, and until he decides to let go, Jeongin is going to bend. Jeongin knows that's how this is going to go. He has no illusions.

"Yes, Hyunjin. I do feel bad that your ex boyfriend is a shithead. He didn't deserve you. He was a shithead before, and I'm sure he's more of a shithead now. I would never treat you that way. I think you know that."

Hyunjin's mouth curls up on one side. A smug little smile. His cheeks have just the barest dust of a blush. Coy. "I do know that," he says quietly.

"Okay. Good." Jeongin is sure his blush is much more noticeable. He's sure it deepens when Hyunjin kicks out and hooks his foot around the back of his calf, just to tease. Jeongin nearly chokes on his next bite of food. It goes down painfully, his eyes watering. He speaks before he can consider why it might be a bad idea. Spontaneously. "If I said I wanted to kiss you?"

The smile Hyunjin is wearing twists up to one side, like he's trying to contain a grin. He looks down. Back up. He's so beautiful Jeongin's heart fucking *hurts*. "I'd tell you to make it count."

"Alright. I'll make it count."

★

In the end, it's not Jeongin that kisses Hyunjin.

Jeongin gets it all teed up, but Hyunjin swings. A good reflection of their time together. The way they operate. How they work.

They snuck into an art gallery. One of those experimental places that does modern exhibits. Hyunjin holds Jeongin's hand as he drags him around, *Oohing* and *Aahing* at all the pieces. To Jeongin, they all look the same. He figures it's not the time to say so. He just nurtures the warmth blooming in his chest whenever Hyunjin smiles, or squeezes his hand. Pulls him closer to show him something.

At the end of a hall, there's a doorway into a dark room. Some sort of homemade film playing on a wall. Projected. Just by way of standing in the room, they're being projected on too. Hyunjin's face flashes with color, an indescribable picture. Jeongin isn't really sure what the film is of— it's too distorted.

Hyunjin faces him, and he giggles. Rain falling on pavement is the main soundtrack. Every once in a while a car's engine will rumble out through the speakers. A woman screaming. It's uncomfortable, and strange, and Jeongin doesn't really care.

One of his hands finds Hyunjin's waist, and the other his jaw. He slots his fingers into place, cradling Hyunjin's face— pulls him closer with the hand at his side. An indecipherable picture— rainbows across Hyunjin's cheeks, eyes shiny in the projector light. It's all happening at once. A woman screaming, rain on pavement, an engine.

Jeongin lets out a breath. He holds Hyunjin, and he realizes that he's content with just holding him. As long as they're close. Hyunjin lets out a breath. Hyunjin kisses Jeongin.

It's soft. Sweet. An open invitation for Jeongin to take it from there. A back and forth. Give and take. Jeongin pulls him closer, tips his head to give. Hyunjin sighs, opens his mouth to take.

A good kiss has nothing to do with mechanics, and everything to do with compatibility.

Hyunjin tastes like cigarettes, because they smoked before they came in. He clings to Jeongin like he needs him, and Jeongin holds the back of his skull like he's bracing them for a fall. Hyunjin's hands are cold, and Jeongin's neck is warm. Jeongin is too eager to keep it from getting messy, and Hyunjin's nails bite into Jeongin's skin when the sensation elicits a soft moan.

They need to part to breathe eventually. Forehead to forehead, breathing heavily. Hyunjin's eyes stay closed, but Jeongin can't help but look at Hyunjin. Jeongin steals another peck. Hyunjin indulges him. And another. Indulged again. Hyunjin smiles into his lips. He breathes out through his nose.

Rain on pavement. Engines. Screaming.

Hyunjin drags Jeongin in to kiss him again, and Jeongin goes.

★

There's a gull screeching, flying against the wind. He floats in place, not going anywhere at all. He must not want to, Jeongin figures. He could if he tried. But, instead, he's just staying in place, screaming. Waiting for something to happen, maybe. A bit of food dropped by the toddler over there, or an invitation to fight from the other seagull swooping up and down near the water.

Ships all look bigger up close— Jeongin is realizing. He didn't think about how big boats would be. Had no reason to. He doesn't like boats. They scare the shit out of him. He's a little more scared that he knows how fucking big they are, honestly. Makes him feel particularly small in the grand scheme of things. Just another speck next to the heaps of things that are happening every day. Things that keep the world turning.

Everything on the coast is so blue. The ocean. The sky. Reflecting off each other and dousing the world in the shade. Jeongin prefers the pink of the morning— or even the dusk— but he won't complain about blue.

"I'm actually from around here. Just further up North," Hyunjin says, breaking the static in Jeongin's brain from where he's tucked under Jeongin's arm, leaning over the railing of the dock. "I never came to the city. And then when I did go to *a* city, it wasn't here."

Jeongin doesn't try to hold back his smile. He's a bit past that point by now. Hyunjin kissed him, and he's been walking on air since. Like that seagull. "You're a country boy," Jeongin tells him. "I've always lived in cities."

"Mhm." Hyunjin leans into Jeongin. He's warm. He's wearing Jeongin's clothes. He smells like smoke, and he tasted a little bit like sweat when Jeongin stole a kiss off of him when they arrived. "City mouse, country mouse."

"That doesn't mean anything to me."

"We're mice, Jeongin. It's romantic."

"Right."

Hyunjin turns his smile into Jeongin's shoulder. He stays like that for a moment. Just breathing. It's all very real. Jeongin feels real. Feels human. It's almost uncanny.

When Hyunjin speaks again, it's quieter. More serious. "I haven't been home since I left. I feel bad about it. I don't hate my parents. I miss my mom."

Jeongin squeezes his arm in what he hopes to be an encouraging fashion.

"I think I should visit her. I don't know. She calls on holidays."

"It might be good."

"It might be bad," Hyunjin counters.

"You could say that about anything."

Hyunjin sighs. A sign he's done talking. "I guess I could."

"I hate my dad. I love my sister. I'm a *city mouse*. I'm maladjusted because I was raised Catholic and my brain is... I dunno. I feel like my wires are crossed."

Hyunjin picks his head up carefully. He turns under Jeongin's arm, facing him fully. Drags a finger from Jeongin's cheek down his jaw. Back up again. "You're funny, Yang." He runs his hands through Jeongin's hair. "I like your brain."

"You barely know me."

“I know enough,” Hyunjin says, not a hint of insincerity in his tone, or his eyes, or the way he touches. Jeongin believes him. That’s enough to make his heart beat faster.

★

When Jeongin is bored, time moves slow. It drips off the hands of his internal clock like molasses. His brain fuzzes out. Television static. He moves, but it doesn’t feel memorable. Doesn’t feel anything other than empty. Wake up. Eat. Go to work. Go home. Sleep. Repeat.

When he’s having fun— well— this is new for him. He hasn’t felt like this in years. Vignettes of a day well spent. All of it smashed into a timeline, second hand moving so fast he can’t catch it.

They go back to the motel at some point after the sun has set. Hyunjin dips off into the bathroom for a while. Jeongin dozes on the bed, arms behind his head. He only pries his eyes open at the sound of soft, timid footsteps, and the soft click of the bathroom door.

Hyunjin stands at the foot of the bed in Jeongin’s sweatshirt and some maddeningly tiny shorts he picked up at the store the first day. The hem of them only barely shows under his top. He has his hair pinned back off his face, a few tendrils hanging down. None of it is enough to hide his flush.

“You haven’t had sex in three months,” he says. “That’s what you told me.”

Jeongin rips his eyes away from Hyunjin’s thighs. “I haven’t,” he agrees.

Hyunjin brings his knee up to the bed, just resting it next to Jeongin’s foot. “What do you think?” he asks.

“About having sex with you?” Jeongin’s hands flex against the bedding— a pathetic show of restraint. He’s trying not to get ahead of himself, but his dick is already interested. He’s already starting to sweat.

“Yeah,” Hyunjin whispers, his finger traces Jeongin’s shin, up and down. Down and up.

“I think you’re going to kill me.”

Hyunjin has the audacity to giggle. He disappears for a moment and comes back with supplies. Jeongin doesn’t know when he bought them, but he doesn’t particularly care— because he has a lapful of Hyunjin a moment later, and he’s trying to keep it together with Hyunjin’s hands shoved up under his shirt, running over his chest as he kisses him.

It’s almost frantic. The way Hyunjin breathes. The way he tears Jeongin’s shirt over his head. Jeongin stops him before they get anywhere else.

“Hyunjin— I need you to be sure, baby. I can’t have you doing this just to make me happy. I’ll be just as happy to hold you as we fall asleep.”

Hyunjin looks at him like he’s the eighth wonder of the world. He says, “I think this is the first time that sex is going to mean something to me.”

He’s very transparent with Jeongin. They’ve built this ironclad trust out of nothing but a few sticks and rocks. Compatibility goes far, Jeongin figures. He knows better than to question a good thing when it happens.

A good thing is happening.

Jeongin flips Hyunjin over as gently as he can. He takes his time undressing him. Hyunjin acts cagey about Jeongin taking off his shirt. Jeongin tells him he can keep it on. Hyunjin takes it off himself.

“I like how it smells, but the real thing will do,” he says, pulling Jeongin back to connect their mouths. Jeongin indulges him for a second before backing off to admire him. The lines of Hyunjin’s body against white sheets. His soft stomach, dark happy trail.

“My god,” Jeongin breathes. He crosses himself right there. *Father, Son, Holy Spirit*. Can’t help himself. Hyunjin giggles, and it’s the prettiest sound Jeongin has ever heard.

Jeongin can tell that Hyunjin is fighting the urge to cover himself when Jeongin wiggles his shorts down his legs. His hands fist into the sheets, a little twitchy.

“Don’t,” Jeongin murmurs. He takes his fill, eyes roving over every bit of skin. “You’re perfect, Hyunjin.”

Hyunjin visibly relaxes. He parts his legs, and Jeongin can see the sheen of wetness on his inner thighs. He must have been prepping himself in the bathroom. Jeongin swears under his breath, hands sliding up Hyunjin’s legs.

“Why are you still wearing pants?” Hyunjin teases breathlessly. His cock is hard and leaking against his stomach. Pretty, just like the rest of him. Jeongin wants his mouth on it, but he knows he won’t last long if he does. He needs to give Hyunjin what he really wants.

“I dunno,” Jeongin mutters. He slides off the bed just long enough to rid himself of his sweats, taking down his underwear at the same time. His crucifix smacks against his chest as he positions himself above Hyunjin, warming lube between his fingers.

This is how it’s meant to be— Jeongin thinks, when his fingers sink inside of Hyunjin. Warm and wet, welcoming. Hyunjin gasps, and Jeongin commits it to memory. Every image of Hyunjin’s parted lips, and ever noise that leaves his mouth. All of it.

Hyunjin is begging from the second Jeongin gets three fingers inside of him.

“How do you want me, Hyunjin?” Jeongin asks, crooking his fingers so Hyunjin’s back arches off the bed.

It takes Hyunjin a second to come down enough to answer, and then he directs Jeongin to sit. Waits patiently as

Jeongin rolls on a condom. Climbs over Jeongin's lap, arms over his shoulders.

He looks Jeongin in the eye as he takes him. He doesn't hesitate. Sinks to the hilt in one smooth movement. He's so tight that Jeongin loses control of his body for a second, ears ringing and vision blotting. His mind goes blissfully blank.

Hyunjin is good at this. Jeongin's hands settle at the dip of his waist, and Hyunjin starts to move. He builds up his pace, a slow grind turning into something all consuming. Jeongin meets him there, pushing up into Hyunjin when he falls down.

They finish one after the other, sharing breaths, Hyunjin's nails marking Jeongin's back. Jeongin spills into the condom, pulling Hyunjin down to get as deep as he can. Hyunjin trembles over him, cum painting Jeongin's stomach.

Time stills for a bit— but not in the same way it used to. This is sweet. Honey and sugar. Hyunjin kissing Jeongin as Jeongin goes soft inside of him. Biding their time, cum drying on their skin. It's ordinary, and a little bit disgusting. Jeongin loves it.

He realizes, after they've both gotten up— after they've both squeezed into the tiny, horrible shower, keen to waste the hot water together— that he could get used to this.

Jeongin tends to jump from thought to thought. He doesn't love change. It scares the shit out of him. Nothing sticks long enough to make him willing to change. But, with his hands in Hyunjin's hair, and a lazy, sleepy smile on Hyunjin's lips— he thinks he could get used to this. Here. Them. Whatever the fuck this all means.

"It would make me happy if you'd still hold me as we fall asleep," Hyunjin says.

"That would make me happy, too," Jeongin replies, and he means it.

★

Jeongin wakes up sometime in the early morning, pink light filtering in through the dusty curtains hanging over the window. He sucks in a sharp breath, still curled around Hyunjin's sleeping form. Hyunjin doesn't move. His legs are stretched out, arm thrown wide across the mattress, Jeongin's hand flat against his stomach.

Fuck. Jeongin's head hurts. His hands are shaky as soon as he extracts himself from Hyunjin.

He scrubs a hand over his face, swinging his legs off the bed.

He pushes himself up, grimacing. Fumbles for his cigarettes and stumbles outside. The motel they're at is open-faced. Two lines of rooms, the second floor caged in by a balcony overlooking the parking lot.

Jeongin pulls out a cigarette, lighting it and leaning against the railing. Sleep hangs to his body. He smells like Hyunjin. He's not wearing shoes, or socks— just his boxers and a t-shirt.

If he told anyone about this— asked them their opinion— they'd say he's crazy. That's fine. He doesn't feel like he has any strong calling to be particularly sane. He has one friend. Kim Seungmin. Seungmin fucked off and got a boyfriend, and he's been terrible at paying Jeongin attention since. It's fine. Jeongin gets it. He'd probably be the same if he were Seungmin and he bagged someone like Minho. Whatever.

The point is, Seungmin would tell him he's *fucking out of his mind*. He'd tell Jeongin to stop being stupid. To come home. Live his stupid, boring life with a no good job and nothing better to do. A seagull flying against the wind.

Stupid metaphor. Jeongin taps his cigarette to knock some of the ash off the end.

He doesn't jump when the door opens behind him, he just turns, hip leaning against the railing. Hyunjin stands in the doorway, socked toes just crossing the threshold. He's still wearing Jeongin's sweatshirt. There's a pink line on his cheek where the pillow was pressed into it.

Hyunjin is pretty. It's kind of hard not to notice. He magnetizes all of Jeongin's attention like some sort of black hole. Beautiful and destructive to everything he thought he knew.

"What are you doing?" he asks. It almost sounds accusatory. Like he thought Jeongin would leave. As if Jeongin could leave him now— when he's already half in love.

"Smoking," Jeongin says, lifting his hand to show. He chews on his lip, watching Hyunjin's eyes trail the cigarette. He doesn't react much. He seems unbothered.

Hyunjin swallows. He nods slightly. There's a quiver in his façade that lets Jeongin know he's worried. Or, he was. "I need to eat something. I'm starved."

"Alright," Jeongin nods. He ashes the cigarette against the railing immediately. "Let's get you something to eat."

Hyunjin doesn't turn until Jeongin steps towards him. Doesn't walk until Jeongin's hand meets the small of his back.

★

Hyunjin orders a black coffee, eggs, and hashbrowns. He steals a sausage link off of Jeongin's plate. He sips on his drink and eats tiny, country-mouselike bites of his scramble.

Jeongin swallows down a mouthful of Coke. It burns his throat a bit. Hyunjin is being flighty. He's acting like he's not good at eye contact, even though Jeongin knows he can be if he wants to be. Jeongin doesn't mind forcing it. He

narrows his eyes, looking across the table. He tees Hyunjin up like that.

"It's okay if you're over it," Hyunjin swings.

"Over it," Jeongin repeats.

Hyunjin shrugs. "Over me. Over this. If that was all it was."

Jeongin chews on the inside of his cheek. He doesn't move his eyes from Hyunjin's face. They don't have anywhere better to be. He catches Hyunjin's hand while it's midair, the fork he's holding clattering to the table. Hyunjin gasps, his hand going limp in Jeongin's grasp. Jeongin teases his fingers apart, until their hands are laced together. Resting on the tabletop. Hyunjin looks at him like he's crazy. Jeongin feels crazy.

"What if we stayed?" Jeongin asks. No better way to phrase it.

Hyunjin blinks. "What?"

Jeongin shrugs, running his thumb over Hyunjin's knuckles. "Got an apartment. Got jobs. What if we stayed?"

There's nothing said for a while. Just breaths. Challenging looks. The twist of Hyunjin's lips. The furrow of his brow. Then, very slowly, Hyunjin starts to smile. His lips pull up at one corner, and then the other. His cheeks go pink. "*I barely know you*," he says, a poor imitation of Jeongin's voice.

"Not much to know." Jeongin smiles right back. "We're compatible, don't you think?"

"Mhm," Hyunjin hums, grin splitting across his face. Jeongin wants to jump the table and kiss it away. Hyunjin makes him feel wild like that. *Fun*.

"No better way to test out being spontaneous than to just try," he says instead of undertaking grotesque displays of public affection.

"We might fuck it up."

"But what if we don't?" Jeongin volleys.

Hyunjin kicks his leg out, hooking his foot around Jeongin's calf and dragging it up and down his leg. "I'm sick of being bored, Jeongin."

"Me too," Jeongin smiles so hard his cheeks hurt. He brings Hyunjin's hand to his lips, laying a kiss on his knuckles. "Let's solve it together."

★

It takes a good month for them to settle.

They get jobs. They move into a shitty studio apartment. Jeongin admits to his sister he's not coming home. In that order.

It's strange. It's crazy. There's a lot to figure out. Sometimes it's too much.

Jeongin smokes a lot in that first month, and then he decides he should try to quit in the second, because he has some sort of desire for longevity now that he's got something worth fighting for. Unbearably corny— he knows— he just doesn't really give a fuck.

Month three, Sooyoung drives out with the last of Jeongin's things (and a few of Hyunjin's, because she was nice enough to pick up what Hyunjin's old roommate didn't toss in the dumpster when he said he wasn't coming back). She pulls Jeongin aside before she leaves and says, "*I don't know why this works, but I've never seen you so happy.*"

Jeongin kisses Hyunjin for an hour and a half that night.

Month four, life hits. Month five, Jeongin hasn't had a cigarette in over a week.

Month six, they're a house settling into some cracks. Jeongin has never been so determined to keep something from falling apart.

Hwang Hyunjin is an enigma.

Normal people don't agree to plans like this. In some ways, they're learning as they go. They're forced to reckon with things at a fast pace— as they come. They sleep in the same bed at night, and they wake up together in the morning.

Sometimes, Jeongin still feels like he's staring at the sun— but he can't bring himself to look away. He'd much rather have Hyunjin's shape burnt into his retinas.

Hwang Hyunjin is a Pisces. He's an early riser when his sleep schedule isn't fucked— which it never is anymore, because Jeongin always lets him fall asleep first. He likes sitcoms, because his family life was never normal, and he liked the idea of having a dad that loved him. He doesn't believe in god. He used to be an alcoholic, so now he doesn't drink, but he still smokes weed. He understands how stupid it sounds to say that at twenty five years old, but that doesn't make it less true. Twenty three was a bad year, because his dad died. He has one friend, because he's not good

at making them, and he's worse at keeping them— her name is Son Hyeju, and she's never afraid to tell him off if he's being stupid. He usually ends up sleeping with his friends, but Hyeju is a lesbian.

He doesn't regret throwing his life away with Jeongin, but he wishes he did.

"You don't mean that," Jeongin says plainly. He's standing at the kitchen sink, hands still dripping with water.

Hyunjin came in a while ago, geared up to fight. He and Jeongin have been going back and forth for a while. One of Hyunjin's coworkers is a fucking creep. He treats Hyunjin like he's barely a person. Jeongin keeps telling him to quit— that they have Jeongin's job as backup. Hyunjin doesn't like to rely on people like that.

His eyes got all unfocused, and he started saying things to try to make Jeongin run, because it's the only defense mechanism he has.

"I do mean that. This was a mistake. You and me," Hyunjin says, voice toneless.

If Jeongin were in a different place in his life, he might have believed it.

But, Hwang Hyunjin is human— despite what Jeongin may think in the back of his mind.

"You don't mean that, Jinnie. You're being an asshole to try to push me away." Jeongin dries his hands on their kitchen towel, in their kitchen, in the apartment they share. He steps closer to Hyunjin. "I know you think you don't deserve good things— but I'm telling you you do."

Hyunjin's eyes are shiny in the fluorescents. He sniffs before he talks, but his voice doesn't shake. "Why do you even care, Jeongin?" A last ditch effort.

"Because I love you," Jeongin says. He doesn't need to try to make it sound convincing, because he means it. He's been thinking it for five months. Saying it in his head every time Hyunjin laughs, or smiles, or touches him. Every time Hyunjin sings in the shower, or comes home from work and flops over on the couch. He's said it a million times to himself, but never out loud. It sounds better out loud.

"Oh," Hyunjin breathes. He softens immediately. He takes the half a step to close the distance between them, allowing himself to go lax against Jeongin's chest. "You do?"

"Of course I do."

Hyunjin blinks a few too many times, a rogue tear rolling down his cheek. Jeongin swipes it up with his thumb. "I love you too. I'm sorry," Hyunjin says.

"I know you do, baby." Jeongin tees him up, pressing their foreheads together. He exhales. Hyunjin swings, closing the gap between them.

Yang Jeongin is an Aquarius. He's not good at getting up early, but he always does (with a smile) if Hyunjin wakes him. Sitcoms are fine, but he's grown a lot fonder of them recently— once they could afford cable. He doesn't believe in god, but he used to— and sometimes he's convinced that Hyunjin is an angel rather than a country mouse. He was addicted to cigarettes, but he quit because he loves his boyfriend— and his hands stopped shaking eventually, once he became more sure of himself. He has one friend, who he calls at least once a week, and a sister who he calls at least twice a week. He's perfectly satisfied sexually. Sometimes he thinks he's no fun. But, it's different now. He's no fun in the way where he'd rather be at home, dancing around the kitchen with his boyfriend than out elsewhere. Watching sitcoms on the couch. Looking at the moon. Waking with the sun. He enjoys the sound of rain on the pavement.

Notes:

this will likely be my last skz work for a long while (besides minsung ficathon, which will be revealed in about a week). it's been so nice writing for hyuniners, i have enjoyed every second of these two :-)

tw: [@inniezzz](https://twitter.com/inniezzz) (<https://twitter.com/inniezzz>)

i do not consent to any translations of my work, thank you for understanding!

Close (#)